

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT
LOK SABHA**

STARRED QUESTION NO:332
ANSWERED ON:16.04.2002
UNIVERSALISATION OF ELEMENTARY EDUCATION
PRABHUNATH SINGH

Will the Minister of HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

- (a) whether the universalisation of elementary education has been a focus area in the successive Five Year Plans;
- (b) if so, the details in this regard;
- (c) whether the goals stipulated in the Five Year Plans have been achieved or the Government are still lagging behind;
- (d) if lagging behind, the reasons therefor; and
- (e) the measures being taken to achieve the goals ?

Answer

THE MINISTER OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT, MINISTER OF SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY AND MINIS
OCEAN DEVELOPMENT (DR. MURLI MANOHAR JOSHI)

(a) to (e) : A statement is laid on the Table of the Sabha.

STATEMENT REFERRED TO IN REPLY TO PARTS (a) TO (e) OF THE LOKSABHA STARRED QUESTION NO. 332 OF 16.4.2002 ASKED BY SHRI PRABHUNATH SINGH REGARDING UNIVERSALISATION OF ELEMENTARY EDUCATION

(a) to (b) : Yes, Sir. Universalisation of Elementary Education (UEE) has been a national goal since independence. The Directive Principles of the Constitution of India under Article 45 envisaged provision of free and compulsory elementary education to all children up to the age of 14 years.

In keeping with the Constitutional directive, the National Policy on Education 1968 and the National Policy on Education 1986, as revised in 1992, focussed on the goal of achieving universalisation of elementary education (UEE). The Five Year Plans have also been formulated keeping in view the Constitutional obligation and the policy objectives.

(c) to (e) : In pursuance of the above policies, the Government of India had launched a number of programmes/schemes like Operation Blackboard, Teacher Education, Non-formal Education, Mahila Samakhya, National Programme for Nutritional Support for Primary Education, District Primary Education Programme and State Specific Projects such as Lok Jumbish and Shiksha Karmi Project in Rajasthan, Bihar Education Project (BEP) in Bihar and Basic Education Programme in Uttar Pradesh.

As a result, considerable progress has been achieved towards universalisation of elementary education. During the period 1950-51 to 1999-2000, the number of primary schools has increased by more than 3 times from 2.10 lakh in 1950-51 to 6.42 lakh in 1999-2000 whereas the number of upper primary schools increased 15 times from 13,600 in 1950-51 to 1,98,000 in 1999-2000.

The enrolment at primary stage has increased by 5.91 times between 1950-51 and 1999-2000, and for girls the increase was 9.16 times. At the upper primary level, the increase in enrolment during this period was more than 13 times, and in the case of girls the increase was about 33 times. The average annual growth rates of enrolment at primary and upper primary levels were 1.73 per cent and 2.54 per cent respectively during the period 1950-51 and 1999-2000. The National Family Health Survey, 1999 indicates that nearly 79% of the 6-14 age group children are attending school.

Although considerable achievement has been made, the goal of UEE has remained elusive. The problems of access, low universal enrolment and dropouts continue to be a challenge. This is true especially for girls, children belonging to Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, working children, urban deprived children, children with special needs and other difficult to reach groups.

The Government has taken a number of steps to ensure UEE. The Constitution (Ninety-Third Amendment) Bill, 2001 was passed by the Lok Sabha on 28.11.2001. The Bill provides for free and compulsory education for all children in the age group 6-14 years as a Fundamental Right.

The Government has also launched the Scheme of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) in November, 2000 to pursue Universal Elementary Education in a mission mode.

The goals of SSA are as follows: -

- All 6-14 age children in school, Education Guarantee Centre, Alternate School, 'Back to School' camp by 2003;
- All 6-14 age children complete five years of primary schooling by 2007;
- All 6-14 age children complete eight years of schooling by 2010;
- Focus on elementary education of satisfactory quality with emphasis on education for life;
- Bridge all gender and social category gaps at primary stage by 2007 and at elementary education level by 2010;
- Universal retention by 2010